

Testimony in support of SB280
March 14, 2012

HONOR KILLING IN MY NAME?

I lost three female members of my family—my mother, my sister, and my great-aunt—in an arson killing. While no murder can be compared to any other murder, I feel, as all murder victims' families feel, that my losses were tragic.

I felt as if a knife had suddenly been plunged into my stomach and twisted—and twisted. For months I would experience that physical pain. For close to thirty years, I was unable to cry. I choked back tears; only total body sobs came. I'd press a clenched fist tightly against my stomach as I shook convulsively, and, almost breathless, I'd pant. That pain never totally goes away. You just learn to live with it.

Through it all, though, I would never have wished the death of the perpetrator. In fact, I feel sorry for some of his family members. The scales of justice could never have balanced my sense of loss. Nor would they have brought me solace, comfort, or closure by asking for his death. I can't even conceive of calling for the premeditated killing of the person who took those lives. Doctors won't do it; it's against their oath to "do no harm." Would I ask the state to do it? Not in my name—ever! Not in my honor.

In some tribal areas of the world, there still exists "honor killings." Some member of the victims' family is obligated to retaliate—a life for a life—to ward off the shame that falls upon the victims' family when one is raped or murdered. How far have we progressed? A culture of violence begets more violence. It's no surprise that states with the highest murder rates are, in many cases, the same states that carry out their executions. How effective, then, is the death sentence as a deterrent? Stop the CYCLE of VIOLENCE!

As Gandhi said in effect, "An eye for an eye, and the whole world is blind." At the recent press conference by Connecticut Murder Victims' Families Speaking Out Against the Death Penalty. I met a number of victims' family members who share these same feelings. If you haven't seen the tape, I'd ask that you assign at least one member of your staff to view it and give you a reaction. I think you'll punish the crime with life imprisonment with no chance for release. Don't punish the victims' families. We want to abolish the death penalty.

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